

PROJECTS FOR ASSISTANCE IN TRANSITION FROM HOMELESSNESS

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCE PAGE
FOOD & NUTRITION



PATH

Projects for Assistance in
Transition from Homelessness

Acknowledgments

This PATH Resource Page is a technical assistance document of the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) Technical Assistance Center. It was developed by Sarah Paige Fuller, MSW and Rachael Kenney, MA of the Institute on Homelessness and Trauma, with Margaret Lassiter, MA of Policy Research Associates. Jeffrey Olivet, MA, Gloria Dickerson, and Ellen Bassuk, MD provided review and guidance. Jonathan Metz provided the layout, design, and creative direction. Thanks also to the government project officers at the SAMHSA, CMHS, Homeless Programs Branch for direction and oversight.

Disclaimer

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INTRODUCTION



Access is critical to a person's health and well-being to appropriate daily nutritional foods. For individuals who experience homelessness, this is a challenge. The most vulnerable populations — children, individuals who are elderly, and people with ongoing health problems — face additional hardships and challenges. Many benefit programs assume that an individual has a home. For example, many benefit programs communicate with recipients by mail. Generally, the benefit programs include food stamps, Women Infants and Children (WIC), and Nutrition Programs for the Elderly. States and communities often have additional programs, e.g., school food programs, food pantries, and soup kitchens that provide additional help with food.

Listed below are the three main federal programs that provide food to those who are homeless and/or who have a low income.

- [Food Stamps](#)
- [Women, Infants, and Children Program](#)
- [Nutritional Programs for the Elderly](#)

A general overview of resources and documents related to food and nutrition is provided on the following pages, followed by sections on these key areas.

Important Websites

- **USDA Food and Nutrition Programs**

Overview of the food and nutrition programs and additional links to areas for nutrition and other USDA products and resources such as Food Stamps, WIC, and the Elderly Nutrition Program. Includes a link to the Emergency Food Assistance Program that provides distribution of food in communities. Includes a section on homeless eligibility.

Direct Link: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns>

Direct Link to Emergency Food Assistance Program:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/pfs-tefap.pdf>

- **Nutrition.gov – Smart Nutrition Starts Here**

Learn about an extensive network of food assistance programs that deliver nutritious meals, nutrition education, and health care referrals to millions of Americans. Includes links to nutrition programs for people of all ages.

Direct Link: <http://www.nutrition.gov>

- **FirstStep - On the Path to Benefits for People who are Homeless**

This is a comprehensive product designed to assist case managers understand and help consumers access benefits and resources. The link below is directly to the food assistance resource section of this tool.

Direct Link: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/firststep/content/foodcategory.html>

- **National Health Care for the Homeless Council**

Provides articles and resources related to homelessness, health, and nutrition throughout their website. Healthy Foods is a printable chart that provides nutritional guidance in English and Spanish.

Direct Link: <http://www.nhchc.org>

Direct Link to Healthy Foods Chart in English and Spanish:

<http://www.nhchc.org/ShelterHealth/ToolKitB/B9MCNHealthyFoods.pdf>

- **Food and Nutrition Service – Hurricane Response and Disaster Assistance**

This website provides information on current disaster assistance rules related to food assistance programs.

Direct Link: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/response/2008-hurricanes.htm>

FOOD STAMPS



The Food Stamp program, under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is designed to alleviate hunger and malnutrition by providing low-income individuals and households with coupons or Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. The coupons or EBT cards can be used to purchase food in authorized retail food stores. In some areas, restaurants can be authorized to accept Food Stamps from people who are homeless, elderly, or disabled in exchange for low-cost meals. The benefits may be used for food alone and may not be exchanged for cash.

Application requirements for Food Stamps vary from state to state. These include requirements regarding identification and proof of homeless/housing status. Generally, applications for Food Stamps should be processed in 30 days. For people with very low income (less than \$150/month in income and no more than \$100 in resources or shelter costs that exceed income and resources), expedited services for Food Stamps can mean receipt of these benefits within seven days of applying. Identification is generally required for this expedited process, but staff may be able to vouch for the person's identity.

For most people who are experiencing homelessness, the Food Stamp Program is easier to access than other programs, such as Medicaid, Social Security, and TANF. Despite this relative success, many eligible people are not enrolled. A 2004 study found that only 60% of people eligible for the Food Stamp Program overall were enrolled (Food and Nutrition Service, 2006). Among people who are experiencing homelessness, this rate may be even lower, and Continuums of Care report multiple challenges associated with matching the unpredictability of life on the streets or in shelters with the Food Stamp program.

Important Websites

- **The USDA Food Stamp homepage**

This website provides general information on the national program, eligibility, immigrant status eligibility, and links to state and local offices. This information is available in 32 languages. The food stamp screening tool is also on this site in English and Spanish.

Direct Link: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp>

Direct Link to Food Stamp screening tool: <http://65.216.150.143/fns>

- **USDA Food Stamp Program Outreach Tool Kits**

This website provides Food Stamp Outreach Tool Kits help increase participation and work with community partners to address hunger.

Direct Link:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/tool-kits.htm>

- **Food Research and Action Center – Homeless Person's Rights under the Food Stamp Program**

This website provides information on the rights of people experiencing homelessness accessing food stamps.

Direct Link:

http://www.frac.org/html/federal_food_programs/FSP/Homeless_Rights_Under_FSP.html

- **FirstStep – Introduction to Food Stamp Program**

This website provides tips on how to help your clients who are homeless access Food Stamp benefits.

Direct Link: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/firststep/content/foodtips.html>

Other Resources

- **Food and Nutrition Service. (2006). *Reaching those in need: State food stamp participation in 2004*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture.**
One important measure of program performance is the ability to reach the intended population. This report presents estimates of the percentage of eligible persons, by State, who participated in the Food Stamp Program.

Direct Link: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/menu/Published/FSP/FILES/Participation/Reaching2004Summary.pdf>

Homelessness Resource Center Record: <http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=32880>
- **Social Security Administration. (2008). *Food Stamps and other nutrition programs*. (SSA Publication No. 05-10100). Washington, DC: Author**
This document provides information about eligibility, resources, and the application process, as well as where to find more information on food stamps and other nutrition programs. It includes information on eligibility related to homelessness. It describes the services provided at the Social Security offices in applying for or obtaining information on food stamps.

Direct Link: <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10100.html>

Homelessness Resource Center Record: <http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33367>
- **FirstStep - Food Stamp Fact Sheet**
This website provides a printable information sheet for consumers on how to apply for food stamps.

Direct Link: http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/firststep/content/word_docs/Food%20Stamps.doc

Homelessness Resource Center Record: <http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=32879>

WOMEN, INFANTS, & CHILDREN (WIC) PROGRAM



The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program is intended for low-income women, infants, and children who may be nutritionally at-risk. The program supplies supplemental nutritious foods, nutrition education, and limited assistance with referrals to other services. WIC is a Federal grant program that receives a specified amount of funding each year. WIC is not an entitlement program. The program is administered under the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Eligibility for WIC includes being a resident of the state, meeting certain limited income requirements (set from state to state), being pregnant or having young children (under one year of age), and having nutritional risk. Homelessness may be considered as a nutritional risk under the predisposing conditions criteria.

Important Websites

- **United States Department of Agriculture - Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)**
This website for WIC provides fact sheets in English and Spanish, eligibility information, and other general information about the program.
Direct Link: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/aboutwic>
- **Food Action & Research Center**
This website provides an overview of WIC, including program updates. There is a link to a Fact Sheet on WIC at the bottom of the page that includes a statement that homelessness is included in the nutritional risk eligibility category.
Direct link: <http://www.frac.org/WIC/index.htm>
Direct Link to Fact Sheet on WIC: <http://www.frac.org/pdf/cnwic.pdf>

Other Resources

- **Buescher, P., Norton, S., Devaney, B., Roholt, S., Lenihan, A., Whitmire, J., et al. (2003). Child participation in WIC: Medicaid costs and use of health care services. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93(1), 145-150.**
Data from birth certificates, Medicaid, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) were used to examine the relationship of child participation in WIC to Medicaid costs and use of health care services in North Carolina.
Direct link: <http://www.ajph.org/cgi/reprint/93/1/145>
Homelessness Resource Center Record:
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=32881>
- **Kowaleski-Jones, L., & Duncan, G.J. (2002). Effects of participation in the WIC program on birthweight: Evidence from the national longitudinal survey of youth. *American Journal of Public Health*, 92(5), 799-804.**
This study sought to estimate the impact on birthweight of maternal participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
Direct link: <http://www.ajph.org/cgi/reprint/92/5/799>
Homelessness Resource Center Record:
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=32882>

ELDERLY NUTRITION PROGRAM



The Nutrition Services Incentive Program, administered by the U.S. Administration on Aging, provides grants to ensure nutrition services for older people, either in congregate settings or as home-delivered meals. Meals are provided at various locations, including senior centers, schools, and individual homes. Meals offered in this program must meet at least one-third of the daily recommended dietary needs for individuals. Besides providing food, the program also provides nutritional screening, nutrition education, and assessment. Services also help individuals learn how to shop, plan, and prepare nutritional meals.

Eligibility for this program does not include a means test, but it is intended for older people who have low-income. Many of the individuals served in this program live alone and have ongoing physical health problems. Nutrition resources can be especially helpful for older adults at risk of homelessness or who are recently housed.

Information on eligibility can generally be obtained through the local Agency on Aging or by calling the Eldercare locator at 1-800-677-1116. Additional resources for information and eligibility are listed on the following page.

Important Websites

- **Administration on Aging – Elders & Families - Nutrition**

This website provides general information on nutrition programs and resources for older adults.

Direct link: <http://www.aoa.gov/eldfam/Nutrition/Nutrition.aspx>

- **U.S. Department of Agriculture – Food and Nutrition Service – Nutrition Services Incentive Program**

This website provides an overview of the Nutrition Services Incentive Program (formerly the Nutrition Program for the Elderly), including a summary of the eligibility requirements for elderly persons and how to apply.

Direct link: http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/nsip/nsip_eligibility.htm

- **Meals on Wheels Association of America**

Meal assistance can be critical for preventing homelessness and for stabilizing new housing situations. This website provides information on the program and a search tool for locating participating agencies. It also includes information on food assistance for the pets of seniors.

Direct link: <http://www.mowaa.org>

- **Eldercare Locator**

This website, sponsored by the US Department of Health and Human Resources, provides additional assistance for locating resources for the elderly.

Direct link: <http://www.eldercare.gov>

We will continue to build on this resource page and welcome your input!

Contact the PATH TA Center at path@samhsa.hhs.gov (with “PATH Food & Nutrition Resources” in the subject line) to comment, submit a question, contribute a tool, or suggest materials to be added.

WHAT IS PATH?

Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness

The PATH Program — or Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness — was authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act of 1990. PATH funds community-based outreach, mental health and substance abuse services, case management, and limited housing services for people experiencing serious mental illnesses — including those with co-occurring substance use disorders — who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless.

PATH funds stimulate state & local contributions

PATH funds are worth more than their face value because they are matched with state and local resources. For every \$3 in federal funds, state or local agencies must put forward \$1 in cash or in-kind services. At a minimum, a \$52 million Federal allocation would result in a \$17 million match. In some states PATH funds and the state and local match are the only resources specifically for serving people experiencing homelessness and mental illnesses.

PATH providers deliver innovative services

PATH providers work with service delivery systems and embrace practices that work. These include:

- Partnering with housing first and permanent supportive housing programs
- Providing flexible consumer-directed and recovery-oriented services to meet consumers where they are in their recovery
- Employing consumers or providing consumer-run programs
- Partnering with health care providers, including Health Care for the Homeless to integrate mental health and medical services
- Assertively improving access to employment
- Improving access to benefits, especially through SSI/SSDI Outreach, Advocacy, and Recovery (SOAR)
- Using technology such as PDAs, electronic records, and HMIS

PATH providers are strong community partners

PATH providers and State Contacts are involved in local and regional planning efforts to end homelessness, including Continuum of Care, 10-Year Plans to End Homelessness, and other planning efforts. PATH providers and State Contacts work to ensure that services are coordinated and available to people experiencing homelessness.

For more information about PATH, please visit <http://pathprogram.samhsa.gov/>





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